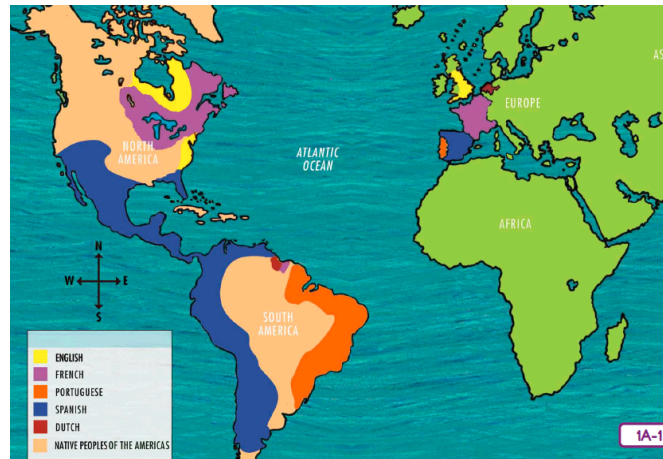


The English Colonies



By 1542, Spanish explorers had claimed a large part of South America, all of Central America, and parts of North America. This did not go unnoticed by the kings and queens of England, France, Portugal, and the Netherlands. They, too, sent their explorers off to the New World to claim land and riches for their homelands. Spain had already conquered much of Central and South America, so other European nations concentrated on claiming parts of North America. Before long, there was a race to claim land for these European kings and queens. The settlement and eventual colonization of this part of the New World had begun!

Soon, European countries realized that, not only could they explore the land for new riches, but they could trade with the people who were already living there. They started to trade with Native Americans. As a result, some Native Americans learned to speak a little French or English.

In the late 1500s, England was becoming more and more alarmed, or shocked, at how much land the Spanish were claiming. The Spanish were not only getting land—they were becoming wealthier, too. It was time for the English to take action!

In the 1580s, English explorers landed on an island called Roanoke Island off of the coast of what is now the state of North Carolina. Explorers persuaded the Queen to allow them to send a group of settlers to the island. When the settlers got there, they found it very difficult to survive in the new land. This was especially true in the winter because they weren't able to plant crops. When the settlers ran out of food, many people starved to death. As soon as they could, the settlers returned to England.

In April 1587, the English made a second attempt. A man named John White led more than one hundred men, women, and children to establish a colony in the new world. They faced the same challenges as before. John White returned to England to get more supplies. When he was finally able to return to the island, the settlers were gone.

One reason many early English settlers struggled to survive was because they weren't prepared for how different their lives would be in this new land. It took several attempts before they figured out how to survive in a place where the climate, soil, landscape, plants, animals and people were quite different from anything they had known before. Eventually, the colonists learned how to use the natural resources that were available to them, and they became less reliant on supplies from England.



England eventually established small settlements up and down the east coast of North America. Initially, these settlements were nothing more than tiny villages. Over time, the villages became towns. By the 1700s, many of the towns had grown into cities that were centers of trade and industry. In the end, thirteen successful English colonies were established in North America.

As the thirteen English colonies began to take shape, they were divided into three distinct regions: the New England, Middle Atlantic, and Southern regions. These regions were different, thus the colonies were very different.

People came to North America at different times and for many different reasons. Some came to get rich, whereas others came for religious reasons. Some hoped to escape poverty, and some were simply curious. No matter why they came, they all had very different experiences when arriving in the New World.